

I. Judges

- a. The book does not bear a personal name and its authorship is unclear. It probably received its final form after the fall of the northern kingdom.
- b. There are twelve judges in the book: six major and six minor (divided strictly on the basis of how much text is given to them and not necessarily their stature/significance).
 - i. Major: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson
 - ii. Minor: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon
- c. The book has three distinct units:
 - i. There was no Joshua in Israel 1:1-3:6
 - ii. There were judges in Israel 3:7-16:31
 - iii. There was no king in Israel 17:1-21:25
- d. There was no Joshua in Israel (1:1-3:6)
 - i. In Joshua's absence the people inquire of the Lord about who should lead the charge. They probably used the Urim and Thummim for this. Judah is to go up.
 - ii. The same inquiry is used near the end of the book but it is concerning who should go up against the Benjaminites not the Canaanites. The answer is the same: Judah. Offensive war of the united nation versus civil war.
 - iii. In Judges 1 the victorious tribe of Judah is contrasted with the less than successful northern tribes.
 - iv. 2:10-3:6
 1. A generation that does not know Yahweh (vs. 10)
 2. "Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" - introduction of the cycle. Never do we hear of the Israelites doing what was good in God's eyes!
 3. Groaning - not repentance but misery - The Israelites survive mainly because of God's mercy and not because of repentance on their part.
 4. The judges are successful to a limited degree. They deliver the people from foreign powers but cannot save the Israelites from their own worst enemy: themselves.
- e. In those days there were Judges (3:7-16:31)
 - i. Othniel (3:7-11)
 1. Only judge from Judah
 2. His behavior is exemplary
 3. He is raised up and gifted with God's spirit - not a hereditary office.
 4. People's evil is worshipping the Baals
 - ii. Ehud (3:12-30)
 1. Only other judge that God "raises up"

2. Nature of the people's evil is not specified.
 3. Ehud and Deborah have no reference of the Spirit of God coming on them (the other judges do).
 4. He is a Benjaminite = a left-handed right hander.
 5. Protagonist = fat Moabites
 6. Victory is attributed to God.
- iii. Shamgar (3:31)
1. 600 Philistines with an ox-goad
 2. Not clear whether he is even an Israelite!
 - a. Shamgar – not a Hebrew name
 - b. Ben Anath – Canaanite goddess?
 3. Shamgar is similar to Samson
 - a. He delivers Israel from the Philistines whereas Samson only “begins to”
 - b. He only gets one verse to Samson's four chapters!
- iv. Deborah and Barak 4:1-5:31
1. As with Ehud, there is no spirit of God but both judges were successful and dedicated.
 2. The oppressing people are within Israel's own borders – the Canaanites of Hazor – Jabin and his military commander Sisera.
 3. She assigns leadership of the troops to Barak of Naphtali. He says he will go but only if she comes. Reminiscent of Moses with God? Deborah agrees but states that the glory will go to a woman.
 4. There are some differences between the poetic account that follows and the prose account but nothing significant.
- v. Gideon (6:1-8:35)
1. He is also known by the name his father gives him – Jerubaal (let Baal contend)
 2. Gideon's call has strong similarities with the call of Moses and involves an angel of the LORD. Gideon's responses show some cracks in his character.
 3. Gideon's father has his own Baal shrine! He has a Yahwistic name Joash (YHWH has given) but names his son after Baal!
 4. Gideon's army is reduced from 22,000 to 10,000 to 300!
 5. After his victory he is faced with internal conflict with the Ephraimites but turns away wrath with a soft answer.
- vi. Abimelech (9:1-57)
1. He is the son of Gideon and a Shechemite concubine.

2. kills his 70 siblings at Shechem – the place of covenant renewal!
 3. Jotham escapes: His parable about the thorn bush = those crowning the king are idiots.
 4. God sends an evil spirit between the people and Abimelech (instead of a good spirit) similar to Saul who is also lacking in integrity and righteousness.
- vii. Jephthah (10:6-12:7)
1. Israel cries out but God tells them to rely on the gods they have sought – see if they can deliver you!
 2. 10:17 – we meet Jephthah. Son of a prostitute and a Gileadite man (could be anyone who slept with his mom!)
 3. Not given to the people as a deliver by Yahweh. They sought him out. He had previously been rejected by the people (probably because of his parentage).
 4. There is a strong parallel between Jephthah and Yahweh in his words in 11:7 and Yahweh’s words in 10:13-14 - you rejected me why do you come to me now when you are in trouble?
 5. Jephthah’s vow: (11:30b-31) It was rash. It would have been unusual for his daughter or wife to not be the first one out to greet him after a victory. He had to have known this.
 - a. Clear meaning of the text (v. 39) is that he did sacrifice his daughter.
 - b. He actually blames his daughter! (v. 35)
 - c. She requests two months to grieve for her unfulfilled life with her girlfriends.
 6. Jephthah and the Ephraimites
 - a. Unlike Gideon Jephthah gets angry with them and kills 42,000 of them.
 - b. He kills more Israelites than the judges together kill of the enemy!
 - c. Jephthah ends up being a greater threat to Israel than do the Ammonites.
- viii. Samson 13:1-16:31
1. Samson – Danite and lifelong Nazirite.
 - a. Nazirites must be disciplined in their appetites, distinctive in appearance, and discrete in associations.
 - b. No wine or grapes, no cutting the hair, No dead things
 2. He will begin to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines but will not finish it!

3. Spirit of the Lord is described as driving, or almost afflicting Samson.
 4. Samson wants a Philistine woman
 - a. Sees her and asks for her.
 - b. She was “right in his eyes” – similar to the overarching problem in Judges: every man did what was right ...
 - c. The whole thing is described as “from the Lord”! (14:4)
 5. In his last act Samson brings low the god of the Philistines (Temple of Dagon collapses) and so accomplishes God’s purpose. His last act was as much a theological one as a physical one.
- f. In those days there was no king in Israel (17:1-21:25)
- i. Chs. 17-18: A levite from Bethlehem
 1. Sets up shop with Micah who has his own idolatrous shrine.
 2. Danites, in their quest for new territory give the Levite a better job offer – priest for the whole tribe. Apostasy moves from the family to the tribal level.
 3. The Levite is the grandson of Moses!
 - ii. In those days there was no king – Israel needs someone that will safeguard their covenant fidelity from their worst enemy – themselves!
 - iii. Chs. 19-21 Levite number two
 1. As a result of the Levite and Benjaminites behavior destruction comes to the people of God.
 2. Civil war erupts and 40,000 Israelites die and 25,000 Benjaminites leaving only 600 from Benjamin. They have to repopulate the tribe and get wives for them in less than reputable ways because they had sworn not to give their daughters to them.
- g. Almost every Israelite that dies a violent death in the book of Judges does so at the hands of their fellow Israelites. It is a book about God’s people killing God’s people.

Joshua Overview

I. Joshua

- a. Who wrote it? Probably Joshua with some later editing of small parts (Joshua's death).
 - i. Modern scholarship attributes it to the Deuteronomist (Dtr.) who was responsible for parts of Deut. Joshua, Samuels Kings, in the 7th and 6th cents. B.C. (exilic apologia)
 1. Dtr focuses on God's gracious covenant, the evils of idolatry and a decentralized cult, and the inevitability of reward and punishment with respect to covenant faithfulness.
 2. shows the themes that run through these books but ignores the historical claims of the books about their origins in time and space.
 - ii. "Until this day" 15:63 and 16:10 – indicates no later than 10th cent.
B.C. (Jebusites driven out ca. 1003 B.C.)
- b. Purpose: to give an interpretive account of one part of Israel's history.
- c. Dating the Exodus and its impact on Joshua:
 - i. When did the conquest take place?
 - ii. Early date 1446 B.C. – conquest around 1400 B.C.
 - iii. Late date 1279-1213 B.C. – conquest somewhere near the beginning of the iron age (1200 B.C.)
- d. Conquest or no conquest? Scholarly models for the development of the state of Israel:
 - i. Conquest Model – biblical model – reasonable and defensible. The others have to build a case – which they do not.
 - ii. Settlement Model – Albrecht Alt – peaceful and slow settlement of unrelated nomadic tribes that eventually banded together for common protection. Doesn't match with biblical or archaeological records.
 - iii. Internal peasant revolt that toppled the Canaanite overlords. The spark that set off this revolting blaze was the entry into the land of a small band of Yahweh-loving radicals. N. Gottwald and E. Mendenhall – socialistic, Marxist ideas.
 - iv. Exodus 12:38 and Numbers 11:4 – mixed group (some foreigners in the group).
 - v. More radical approaches – K. Whitelam and more notably T. L. Thompson. The latter holds that there never was an "Israel" – it was all made up during the Persian period.
- e. Historical setting
 - i. Hittite and Mitanni empires in a struggle.

- ii. Amenophis III and Amenophis IV (Akhenaten) were not much interested in military conquest. The latter was more of a navel gazer.
 - iii. Canaan was clear of interference from a major foreign power (especially true for the early date)
- f. Joshua is the successor of Moses but is very different from him. He is not a prophet but rather the first in a line of leadership that comes to fruition in the kings of Israel.
- g. The book and the complete destruction of the Canaanites. How do we reconcile this with a Holy, Just, and Loving God?
 - i. Requirement of purity in Israel's worship.
 - ii. The Canaanites sin (Gen. 15:16)
 - 1. The Canaanites are not condemned in the book of Joshua as decadent (unlike in Deut.). They are condemned rather for their failure to respond affirmatively to the Israelites presence. Israel and Joshua have the same choice before them with respect to God's torah – affirmative or negative.
 - 2. We cannot pit this destruction against the NT as if it is something totally foreign. The horror of hell will be no less than those of Jericho.
- h. Achan
 - i. All of Israel suffers because of Achan's sin. They are polluted – tainted by the sin of the Canaanites!
 - ii. The essence of Achan's sin: desiring and taking that which belonged to someone else (God).
 - iii. Achan and his family are killed, including his children. Why?
 - 1. corporate punishment? (not likely)
 - 2. Kherem – by taking something that was under this ban, Achan and all associated with him came under that ban. Therefore they were a threat to the community of Israel.
 - 3. God is just – he does not play favorites here. Achan and all with him suffer the same fate attendant on the Canaanites.
- i. The Gibeonites: treacherous or clever?
 - i. Joshua making a covenant with them is a violation of the LORD's instruction not to make covenants with any foreign nation. (Ex. 23:32, 34:12; Dt. 7:2)
 - ii. They submit to Israel and are saved.
 - iii. Joshua is faithful to them and honors his covenant – parallel to

God. It is not because of any quality on the part of the Gibeonites.

j. Theological Themes:

- i. The Land – a MAJOR theme of the book – it is GIFT to the people – not a prize for their action of successful conquest. The focus is on

God’s action. Retention of the land is tied to obedience or the people will be expelled just like the Canaanites.

- ii. Rest – Part of the gift from God. Rest from enemies upon the faithful accomplishment of taking the land. Rest is part of the inheritance! (Garden of Eden motif again)
- iii. Covenant – obedience to the covenant is emphasized again and again. Mount Ebal and Gerizim at Shechem. The ark of the covenant (obedience, relationship, and presence).
- iv. Purity of worship = separateness from the Canaanites.

k. Joshua’s farewell

- i. Survey of the past to serve the Lord (“serve” appears 14 times between 24:14 and 24:24.
- ii. In light of what God has done – serve the LORD! Neutrality is not an option. You will either serve God or gods.
- iii. People respond in the positive (vs. 16-18)
- iv. Joshua – you are not able to serve God!
 1. Why? Because of who God is.
 - a. He is holy, jealous, and will not forgive your transgressions (special relationship requires faithful obedience).
 - b. Service must be rendered on God’s terms instead of the terms of one’s own choosing.

THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

The Deuteronomistic History is the position regarding the historiographic composition of the books of the Old Testament from Deuteronomy through II Kings as a unified collection of writings. The authors suggest six conclusions regarding this belief. First Deuteronomistic History (DH) is historiographic in nature. This means the writing of history especially the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods. Second The literary and theological foundation of DH is based on the law as written in Deuteronomy 5. This repetition of the law by Moses was written as a reminder to Israel as it refers back to the events and the covenant given on Mt. Horeb. Third DH is structured by transitional speeches. Examples include: Joshua 1:11-15; 23:2-30 which begins and ends Israel's settlement spoken by Joshua, I Samuel 12:1-24 which bridges from the period of the judges to that of the monarchy spoken by Samuel, and I Kings 8:12-51 which describes the United Kingdom, the Temple, and the Divided Kingdom spoken by Solomon. Fourth there is at least one preexilic and one postexilic redactor. One reason, but there are many, suggests that the preexilic historian(s) provided the preexilic material regarding history and one other historian(s) provided the prophetic material. Fifth the DH used extensive source material. This includes names, places, events, promises, theology, and especially the covenant containing the law comparing Exodus 20: 3-17 and Deuteronomy 5: 7-21 describing the Decalogue. Sixth The vocabulary and ideology throughout DH does not suggest multitudes of redactors as some have suggested. This includes the Gottingen School which suggests two postexilic redactors based on portions pertaining to the law and to foreign people in Israel. It includes the Prophecy Theory, the Name Theory, and the Pan- Deuteronomic Theory. (DOTHB 228)

What are the strengths and weaknesses of that theory?

The Deuteronomistic History theory respects the ancient writers ability

to compose complex words and ideas inspired by Yahweh but written in the times and culture of the writer. When you compare the early Greek historian Herodotus one gets an appreciation for the quality of historical writing and truth in the early portions of the Old Testament versus the exaggerations in numbers and the inclusion of gods and mythology in Histories by Herodotus who was only a traveler and observer of history by his own admission. Second one must admire the biblical author's intent to be specific where possible and to bring a disciplined approach chronologically to writing history. Third the unity of purpose and ideology adds credibility to DH theory while unified throughout it permits diversity of insight without requiring redactors for every deity name change or focus marked by emphasis on the law, the prophecy, or the history.

The Deuteronomistic History is criticized for several weaknesses. First one critic indicated that the idea of hope and grace are not sufficiently recognized by DH theory. This is based on the renewal of the Davidic royal line following the return from Babylonian captivity (II Kings 25: 27-30). Second several critics claimed redaction under King Josiah and criticized the omission of the value of the monarchy as expressed in II Samuel 7:1-17 pertaining to Nathan's speech and II Samuel 7:18-29 pertaining to David's speech. This expresses a future hope theme compared to an apparent lack of hope as a theme in DH. This too is based on the unfaithfulness of Jeroboam I northern kingdom failures versus the supposed faithfulness of the Davidic kings with the consolidated worship in the Jerusalem temple and subsequent reforms under Josiah. Third under this interpretation too much emphasis is accorded to the reform event under Josiah. Fourth critics claim that DH clearly shows two primary themes which are the law and the continual presence of foreigners in the Promised land which required insertion of linking history (Deuteronomy 4-30 to connect the two divergent themes. Fourth critics claim a required third redactor which explains the later inclusion of prophetic material embedded at a later date. Fifth there is a claimed shift in authorship during the period of King Hezekiah which is not taken into account by DH. Sixth some critics

believe that taking a historiographic approach to develop DH should be replaced by a literary and theological approach because it is claimed that source criticism is weak regarding proper interpretation of ancient manuscripts. Finally more recent critics have decided that the books in question should be viewed as independent works based on the lack of editorial coherence. Some have taken the path of suggesting a redactor for every book in the Old Testament group in question.